



Woven to the Past

By Joquita Burka

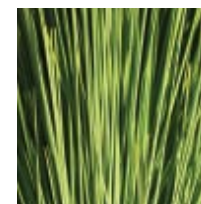
From mother to daughter. Father to son.
Generation to generation. Today the ancient
West African tradition of weaving sweetgrass into
art flourishes in the South Carolina Lowcountry. Here's
a little sweetgrass primer with this note—this is much
harder than it sounds. It takes years to develop
the skills exhibited in these works. The
faster and easier way to enjoy one of
these baskets is to head down the
unofficial sweetgrass basket
highway, Highway 17 near
Mt. Pleasant, where roadside
stands showcase this art.



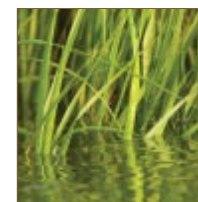
Originally, sweetgrass
baskets were used in the
rice fields as winnowing trays
to separate rice from chaff.
Later, baskets became
decorative as well as a
necessity for daily life.

Materials

Materials include sweetgrass, palmetto
leaves, longleaf pine needles and a
“needle” traditionally made from
the handle of a spoon.



Longleaf pine needles



Sweetgrass



Palmetto leaf



Process

After drying,
the sweetgrass
(muhlenbergia
filipes) is wrapped
with narrow strips of
palm leaf. The weaver
then uses the pointed
“needle” to stitch the strands
of palm through the tightly
wrapped coils of sweetgrass.
For decoration, longleaf pine
needles are used.

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